1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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In the chapter on marriage we saw how the elders had to witness the betrothal ceremonies, and how the *panchayats* deal with cases of divorce and elopement. It may be added that among the Hill Marias the clan-headman, like the *Sendhia* of the Chanda Marias, gets certain traditional fees which the parties have to pay in addition to the compensation which the *panchayat* may award to the injured parents or husband, or to the cost of the tribal feast; at every marriage in Kutru and Bhairamgarh Mar the clan-headman gets a fee of eight annas; when a *panchayat* has settled the compensation to be given to the first husband by the man with whom his wife has eloped, the old and the new husband have each to pay the clan-headman four annas. But the latter is expected not to retain the whole of his fee-income, but to divide it with the headmen of the villages of his clan who have assisted in the ceremony or *panchayat*.

I have already described on page 246 above, the ordeal to which the Gume Hill Maria clan *panchayat* in 1929 subjected a Toinar youth accused of incest with a girl of his clan. How far the ordeal survives in the remotest parts of the State I cannot say; naturally instances of its use very seldom come to light. There is reason to believe that ordeals of this kind were a regular feature of the 'justice' administered by bygone Chiefs and zamindars of Bastar, rather than a product of aboriginal thought; compare the account of the settlement of the Kudmer-Jatalur land dispute at page 96 above. Ordinarily, however, the *panchayats* follow no regular procedure beyond hearing the parties and their friends as informally as possible and deciding the case then and there after free discussion among themselves.

Questions of property seldom arise among the Hill Marias, there being obviously so little scope for dispute when 95 per cent. of the cultivation is shifting cultivation of hillsides regarded as the property of the clan and not of the individual, and when the village site is shifted at least every six years. Sons after marriage live in a separate portion of the long-house of their father or uncle, if there is space for adding a portion for them, or else build a separate house as close as possible; when next the village is shifted there is ample space for all to live in separate houses under one long-house roof. Questions of inheritance of houses therefore arise only when, as among the Bison-horn Marias, villages have become permanent and are not shifted at regular intervals. Even here, however, there are few disputes. The little value set on houses is shown by the fact that it is generally the youngest son who lives on in the father's house after his death, as probably his elder brothers will have married long before him and built separate houses for themselves on marriage. There is among the Bison-horn Marias a vague right to demand

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partition of a father's property when a son sets up house for himself, but although he can press for his share, it is felt by the community to be against tribal spirit, rather than unfilial. When, on the other hand, a father had outraged tribal feelings by seducing his sons' wives and driving his sons from his house, his refusal to let his sons have any share in the family property was considered by the Bison-horn Marias an additional justification for his subsequent murder by his sons.

There is so little domestic property of great value among the Hill Marias, and so many of a man's few tools and possessions, as we have seen, are buried with him, that inheritance disputes about movable property are almost unknown. Though among the Bison-horn Marias less is buried or burned with the dead, the remaining movable property generally passes with the house; if the elder sons have set up separate establishments in their father's lifetime they will have equipped themselves with the few possessions they need, and will not worry about the younger brother appropriating what their father has left. Women's ornaments generally are buried or burned with them.

When the inheritance includes valuable ri. lands, they remain generally the joint property of the sons and brother's sons, and the father's surviving brothers, the eldest son generally nominally being the manager, though he will certainly have to give way to an uncle or younger brother or cousin if he is inefficient, weak-minded or deformed. The produce will be stored in his granary, but shared among the members of the family.

Daughters and sisters have no right of inheritance of their father's or brothers' lands or property. For the land is really the land of the clan, and the daughters and sisters will on marriage have passed to the clans of their husbands. A widow is entitled only to maintenance, and as on her husband's death she very often becomes the wife of his younger brother, she gets her maintenance as a matter of course; if he leaves no younger brother and she does not marry again, she lives on in her late husband's house and works with other women of the family, and is maintained by their husbands. A girl whose parents die before she is married frequently goes to a married sister's house and becomes a co-wife.

For a woman on the whole is a kind of property, or a valuable adjunct to the house and family. For her, the husband's family has had to pay a bride-price that is a severe tax on its resources[1]; or else, where cross-cousin marriage prevails,[2] she represents the repayment of a debt incurred when her father took his bride from

[1] See pp. 248-50 and 252-3 above.
[2] See pp. 234 and 247 above.